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The Village By The Sea

BY

WILLIAM LEE POPHAM.

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Thru the World Together.

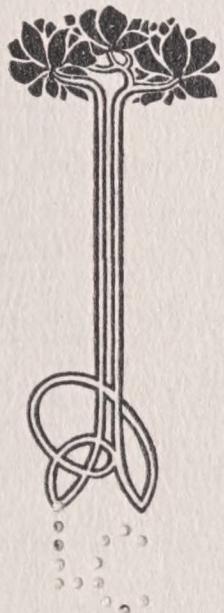


Thru the world we'll journey
As lovers side by side;
And love's morning star
Will be our daily guide.

Be the journey even
Or beset with stone—
May sunshine and shadows
Find us not alone.

The Village By the Sea

Price 50 Cents



BY

WILLIAM LEE POPHAM

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BY

WILLIAM LEE POPHAM

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THE AUTHOR'S OTHER BOOKS.

“Poems of Truth, Love and Power.”

“Silver Gems in Seas of Gold.”

“Nut Shells of Truth.”

“Love’s Rainbow Dream.”

“The Valley of Love.”

“A Tramp’s Love.”

“She Dared to Win.”

The Village By the Sea

BY

WILLIAM LEE POPHAM

“The Village by the Sea” is a small city, kissed by the laughing waves of the Atlantic and populated by the highest rank of citizenship found in the “Land of the free and the home of the brave.” The purple clouds hung in pictures of silver on the western horizon and the evening sun was sinking low behind the vine-clad knob. The October breezes sang their autumn song and swayed the bending boughs with sweetest melody. The meadows were waving their flower-flags as an adieu to the setting sun, and all nature shown to be the

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handiwork of God. The village talk was about the big wedding to take place "to-night" at the Presbyterian church.

Dressed in white, girls paraded the streets for the evening walk; and the talk was the "wedding, wedding, wedding." The reception of the day was over and everything was in splendid preparation for the brilliant affair which now was drawing near a climax. The sun had set in the far west where only a streak of crimson and gold was left to mark its mighty way. The village church bell was ringing its wedding joys and two young hearts so soon to be "as one" were beating with pride and love.

The bride and groom (to be) sat together in the beautiful parlor where "man and wife they agreed to be," picturing the future and

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talking of the wedding of a few hours hence. "I feel that this is the crowning period of my life," said Jess Bryan, "an epoch to ever stand out in letters of gold on memory's fair page."

"I hope so," responded Rubie Gladstone. "To-night is to be the beautiful realization of my fanciest dreams."

"May it ever be a beautiful dream," said Jess Bryan, as he looked lovingly into her flashing eyes.

The twilight shadows were flashing and night was slowly drawing her curtain down, while the breezes seemed to sing as if trying to rock the slumbering world to sleep. Folks might be preparing to retire in some parts of the shadowed world, but every citizen in "The Village by the Sea" was wide

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awake, and droves of persons were moving toward the church amid the sweet chimes of the wedding bell. Carriages from many parts of the county were being unloaded and the church aisles were fastly filling for the brilliant occasion.

The great audience that filled every available space in the large church swayed like the rolling sea, while the bridal party walked down the aisle amid enchanting peals of the wedding march and bouquets of admiring friends.

Halting at the large urn of beautiful flowers, the splendid couple stood at the altar and faced the parson, who stood ready to pronounce the ceremony. The bride-to-be of sixteen singing summers, attired in streamlets of white and with blushing modesty, stood with her hand resting, with poetic con-

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fidence, upon the strong arm of a noble man whose sterling qualities were an honor to American manhood and a blessing to the loftiest state of our matchless womanhood. While the enchanted peals of the dying music still filled the perfume-laden air, each answered the questions which stood for loyalty, love and hope this side of the grave.

From the fields of friendship were gathered every flower of sentiment and shade of beauty, and while the bride and groom marched toward the door as "wife and husband" bouquets showered, rice rained from clear skies, roses rolled at their feet, electric lights flashed from colored trimmings, maidens waved their jeweled hands, mothers smiled with approval, while congratulations and well wishes filled the glad air with melody sublime.

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The carriage was awaiting with open door, and after hundreds of congratulatory handshakes the carriage door went "bang" amid pealing strains of brass bands, laughter of boys and girls, bark of dogs, whinny of ponies, light of stars and soft gleams of yellow moonlight, while rolling wheels carried Jess Bryan and his young bride to the railroad station, where the Pullman coach "claimed its own." The honeymoon of three months was spent traveling, amid rare scenery, when the bride and groom came back to their newly furnished home to "live and die" in "the Village by the Sea."

A few days later Jess Bryan, attired in blue overalls, kissed his girl wife, and leaving her fond embrace at the front gate, started on his "old run" in the position of

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engineer of a "thru passenger" train. The young engineer only came home every other night, but "Darling Rubie," as he often called her, always greeted him with caresses at the front gate. Home was his heaven and Rubie was the queen. Indeed, a queen she must have been, for Jess often said: "Heaven holds no more beauty, bliss and happiness than my vine-clad cottage where Darling Rubie waits to greet me."

This cottage home was a picture of glory and love which no artist can paint. "I am so glad you are home again," said the pretty wife. "I wait and long to hear you give the signal from the engine, telling me you are coming; and next to your own dear voice, it's the sweetest sound on earth."

"I'm glad you recognize the toot

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of the whistle," said Jess. "I will always give it as I pass the bend to let you know that all is well."

Jess pressed her to his bosom, saying: "I'm the happiest man in the world and probably the richest, for I have you."

"Having me couldn't make you rich," said Mrs. Bryan, smiling, "but I trust it can make you happy."

"I ask no greater wealth," said Jess, "than a happy home and a loving wife as its queen."

The purple glow now faded from the western skies; the flowers closed their petals in dewy slumbers of the night; every wing was folded in the bower; every voice was hushed; the full-orbed moon lit the clouds with silver and God's jewels of dew sparkled on every bending flower,

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while the happy couple slept and dreamed away the silent hours.

Months passed on the wings of time and another picture swung on the golden hinge of matrimony. Jess Bryan stood in a father's pride by the bedside, stooped tenderly and kissed a happy mother and baby boy. It was a beautiful picture as Jess said to his young wife: "You now have the honor of motherhood and you are still my bride."

The peach of maidenhood was still upon her cheek, a girlish lustre kindled in her eye and a wife's and mother's pride began to lay plans for a prosperous family and happy home.

Weeks passed and time came to name the baby. Father, mother and baby sat together in their happy home. "I will leave it to its

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darling mother to name," said Jess Bryan, as he kissed the infant's soft cheek.

"No," said Mrs. Bryan, "I will have its father to say the name he shall carry thru life."

"As it's a boy," continued the mother, "I will gladly leave it for you to name, but if it were a girl, I would accept your generosity and name it Bessie Lee."

"Well," said Jess, laughingly, "we may call him Bessie Lee Bryan."

"That's a girl's name," said Mrs. Bryan.

"Perhaps," said the husband, smiling, you might some day have an opportunity to use your favorite name, 'Bessie Lee.' "

"Stop your teasing, Jess," said Mrs. Bryan, and she blushed like a sixteen-year-old girl before her

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lover while being implored for a caress.

"Don't worry about the name," said the proud father. "I'll give him a name that might be written in the hall of fame."

A brief two days passed and the young engineer again pressed the sweet lips of wife and baby. "What's going to be darlings name?" said Mrs. Bryan, almost the first word after his return.

"Clayton Bryan," said the husband, proudly. "How do you like my selection?"

"Oh, I see," said Mrs. Bryan, "you name him for his grandfather and I think it ideal."

"God grant that he will ever reflect honor upon the family name," she continued.

Jess Bryan continued to follow his occupation and supported his

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wife and child with plenty of everything which he thought might add to domestic happiness. Mrs. Bryan was the proudest and happiest of mothers and proved to be a jewel in a Christian home.

Two happy years passed and the home again became the scene of a new-born. A sweet, dimpled baby girl added joy to the proud father and mother.

The holiest sight to mortal eyes to-day is a young mother bending over the cradle of her first born—it calls to mind the miracle of that Christmas night in the lowly manger where gentle Jesus first saw the morning dawn. About each infant head there seems to shine some sacred ray from that glorious halo that circled the countenance of the Christ.

Jess Bryan was not only the

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proudest of fathers, but was considered the bravest engineer on “No. 1.”

Loyal to duty, loyal and loving to family and loyal to God, Jess Bryan had two babies to kiss, and said that “Darling Rubie” was still his bride.

One evening the mother waited patiently the signal that Jess was “safe and sound.” The passenger train roared in the distance, and as it rounded the curve near the Bryan home a happy wife listened to hear just one little “toot” of the whistle. On the train roars! “Toot,” “ah! there it is,” said Mrs. Bryan to the babies. Leading the little boy with one hand and pressing the dimpled baby girl to her glad heart, she waited to greet her husband at the gate. In a short time the glad husband and father came toward

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“home, sweet home,” the blessed shrine of precious memories! The clouds were a sea of sunset gold and a shower of kisses fell from the heaven of love. Soon all were at the supper table, and after the husband asked the blessings of the King of Kings, Mrs. Bryan said: “Jess, what are we going to name our girl baby?”

“We! why, dear, there’s no ‘we’ in it. Do you not remember,” said the husband, smiling, “that I were to name the boys and you were to name the girls?”

“Besides,” continued Mr. Bryan, “I thought that it was a foregone conclusion that you were to name the girl ‘Bessie Lee’ for your mother.”

“Be it so,” said Mrs. Bryan, with a dimpled smile, “of all names, it’s my choice.”

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“Our pleasure is mutual,” said the husband, “and we have two of the sweetest children that ever gladdened a home.”

In a few short years Clayton and Bessie Lee made the geese flutter, the chickens flee, the grasshoppers jump, the June bugs hum and the pigs squeal. Play is childhood’s heaven and bare feet paddle in the mud and wade the branch, while young hands play a romantic part in capturing a young bird or rob the nest of its eggs.

CHAPTER II.

Clayton Bryan and his sister, Bessie Lee, grew to be very devoted to each other and were the pride of a father's and a mother's heart. Besides being obedient and manly, the brother was a kind-hearted youth, and whatever he undertook to do he did it well. It was his greatest pleasure to help his mother and sister, for so long as he did this he knew that he also pleased his toiling father. When the tired engineer returned from his long run, he never had any work to do, for Clayton always carried the water, cut the wood, fed and milked the cow and made himself useful in general.

Happy school days were in their prime. The golden days passed like dreams, while the Bryan chil-

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dren "learned their lessons" and were punctual in attendance. The charming young teacher, Miss Princess Le Roy, was kind and patient and commanded the respect of all.

Clayton Bryan was then a lad of seventeen years and soon learned "the first rule," for his teacher was a damsel of eighteen brief summers. The young teacher was beautiful as her name, and when Clayton Bryan heard the children say, "Miss Princess," his young heart seemed to leap for liberty of expression behind the bars of love.

Princess LeRoy recognized in Clayton an extraordinary talent for public speaking, a manly nature—and above all, his courteous attention, for not a day passed without his smiling presentation of a big, red apple, a bunch of grapes or something nice in its season.

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Despite her life's aim to "marry a wealthy man," she grew to return the lad's love, and yet against her own will.

The school children came home in droves and their glad laughter floated in the summer breeze and was lost amid the song of the fluttering birds.

"The Village by the Sea" afforded good educational facilities, and, above all things, it was Jess Bryan's desire to give his two children an early education. In this he was successful, for the Bryan children stood amongst the head of the class. The Bryan home nestled on a beautiful lawn at the edge of town and every afternoon, on returning from school, Clayton and Bessie Lee were met far up the lane by "Watch," the faithful old family dog. Watch would come

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bounding with all his speed and greet the brother and sister by cutting great capers on the lawn.

It was a cloudy morning when Jess Bryan kissed his wife and "big babies" a fond "good-bye" and started on his usual run. Only a few short years ago his kisses were for wife and babies, but now they were for "wife, son and daughter," and with a request to "be good at home and school until papa returns." The brave engineer left his splendid family of three at the gate and soon was roaring toward the west at rapid speed. That night as Mrs. Bryan led the family prayer, her heart seemed heavy as if something would happen. After the prayer the mother and two children sat around the blazing fireside of a sweet Christian home.

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Watch was in the yard and howled and moaned piteously. This the dog had not been known to do before. The faithful old dog howled and howled till the sound seemed to burden the air with sadness.

"Oh, do run out there," said Mrs. Bryan, addressing Clayton, "and make Watch stop that dreadful noise." The boy obeyed, but his efforts were in vain; for when he came back to the fireside, the dog howled the more. "Take him a piece of meat," said Mrs. Bryan. This was also in vain, for the dog would not eat. "I have a very queer presentment to-night," said Mrs. Bryan. "I fear your father is doomed for an accident."

"I trust not," said Bessie Lee, as she placed her soft, white arms around her mother's neck.

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"Don't borrow trouble, mother," said Clayton. "If anything should happen, we would get a telegram at once." Dark shadows hung on the brow of night and the little family were soon quiet in bed.

The brother and sister were soon in the land of wanted slumber, but no sleep for Mrs. Bryan. The dog howled, the wind moaned and the old clock counted off the hours of a sleepless night of a true, loving, devoted wife.

Morning came and melted darkness into light and the sunbeams kissed the dew from the cheeks of sweet smelling flowers. The children kissed their mother as usual and started for school. Again evening was approaching and Watch met them far up the lane as usual with "proud capers." When the children arrived the lonely mother

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was waiting to greet them at the gate. Her heart was heavy and she could not conceal her grief. The evening work was hastily done and the time came to hear the signal which told that husband and father was "safe." Twilight was nearing when wife and children had finished supper and were sitting in the yard to hear the signal. "It's train time now," said Mrs. Bryan.

"Yes, and listen!" said Clayton.
"I hear it coming."

"Yes, I hear it roar," said Bessie Lee.

"Thank God!" shouted Mrs. Bryan. Now a roaring train could be heard distinctly and all eyes were turned in that direction.

"Just one little 'toot,'" sighed Mrs. Bryan, "and I shall be the happiest of women."

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“Toot! Toot! Toot!” Three times.

“What does it mean?” asked Mrs. Bryan.

“It’s not father’s signal,” said the son. A moment later the train roared by, but no other signal was heard.

“It’s the first time your father has failed to give the signal,” said Mrs. Bryan, in tears.

“Oh, mother!” said Bessie Lee, “that’s a freight train!”

“That’s right,” said the son. The passenger train was past due. Far up the track it was still and dark. “It’s no use to stay out here, mother, said Clayton, and upon his suggestion the three anxious ones went to the house.

“I have felt queerly since last night,” said Mrs. Bryan.

“Mother, let me run down to the

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depot and see the report," suggested Clayton.

"What's the matter with No. 1?" asked Clayton of the agent.

"It's a wreck, Clayton, said the agent, "but don't frighten your mother."

"For God's sake! tell me, man, is my father killed?" asked the boy.

"Don't be frightened, boy," said the agent, "no one is killed."

"I want to know the facts," demanded Clayton.

"Here's the telegram; read for yourself," responded the agent. The boy took the paper with a trembling hand and read it with wild eyes. "No. 1 two hours late, caused by wreck. Several injured. None killed."

With a leap and a bound Clayton started back home to break the news to mother and sister. Mrs.

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Bryan and Bessie Lee stood in the doorway in each other's embrace, waiting the boy's return. Watch now resumed his awful distressing howls which made cold chills run over the human body.

"Something is wrong," said Mrs. Bryan. "I never heard Watch take on so."

Bessie Lee didn't speak, but only sobbed and drew her arms more tightly around her mother.

"Oh, for that one little signal," sobbed the woman.

"Listen! the gate slammed. It's Clayton," sobbed Mrs. Bryan. The boy came in a run.

"Father's not dead!" shouted the boy. Their faces lighted up with joy.

"Is he hurt?" asked mother and sister in one voice.

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"Don't know!" answered he.
"Here's the telegram."

Frightened and trembling, both mother and sister took hold of the paper and read: "No. 1 two hours late, caused by wreck. Several injured. None killed."

"May be father's not one of the injured," exclaimed Bessie Lee.

"Something tells me he is," responded Mrs. Bryan. "I have felt it since yesterday morning."

"Let us all go in and pray," said Mrs. Bryan. It was a sad scene. Every one on their knees amid grief and tears. The dog still howled. "Seems like Watch is praying, too," thought Clayton. The old clock struck eleven! Past bed time! but sleep wasn't even thought of. By this time the news of the wreck had spread over the whole township and many anxious minds were won-

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dering. The clock struck twelve!

“It sounds like a funeral knell,” sobbed the tearful mother.

Very little conversation passed. The very tick of the clock seemed “oh, so sad!”

Bang! went the gate! “Oh, could it be dear father?” thought each sorrowful one.

“It’s the depot agent,” sobbed Bessie Lee, as she stretched her neck to see. The agent was met at the door by three inquiring voices. He tried to smile to keep down fright, but smile he could not. “Deceit don’t work now,” thought the agent, “and they have to know it sometime.” The agent pushed his way inside the door.

“I have some sad news,” said the man, and he proceeded to read the telegram: “Engineer Jess Bryan died at 11 o’clock from injury sus-

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tained in wreck on No. 1.” For the time not another word was spoken. Everybody sobbed, cried and moaned. The son, daughter and mother knew the engineer was dead before the agent read the telegram, for his face and actions told the sad story. The broken family circle of three sobbing ones were together in the corner of the room and presented a pathetic scene. Two score of neighbors came to the Bryan home to offer sympathy and assistance. The next morning the remains arrived on the 8 o’clock train and were brought directly to the Bryan residence.

The dim parlor which had been the scene of a happy, united family less than three days ago, now held the dead body of one of the noblest of fathers. “He died at his post,” said an official of the road. “Yes,”

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responded another, "he died a hero and had his hand upon the throttle when he was struck by the falling rock."

The result of a "caved-in" tunnel; and this is its scene.

There had not been a death in recent years for which the citizens of "the Village by the Sea" expressed more sorrow.

A bereaved widow and two orphans followed the black casket to the cemetery, and, amid tears, moans and sighs of a great multitude of friends, the body of Jess Bryan was gently laid in its last resting place. The widow and orphans went back to the cottage, but home had lost a jewel. A vacant chair was there! A father's voice was vanished music, and his kisses were withered flowers. His noble, manly presence and loyal love were now forget-me-nots of cherished memories.

CHAPTER III.

In “the silent city of the dead” there was a monument erected at the head of Jess Bryan’s grave bearing this

Epitaph:

“Husband and father is gone, but
not forgotten,
His life at the post of duty per-
ished;
Tho’ removed to heavenly portals,
His memory is sweetly cher-
ished.”

Fresh flowers were kept blooming on his grave in summer and pretty shells lay as a covered lid over the remains in winter. Often as the sun twinkled his “good-night” to the twilight world, a widow and two orphans were seen to visit the silent

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grave where lay their crushed hopes and blighted joys.

Tho' Jess Bryan died without a life insurance policy, he left an unmortgaged home to his loved ones who will cherish a father's and a husband's memory forever. It is a home without a father but the heavenly Father abides within the cottage walls and is the consoler of the broken home.

Clayton Bryan, the manliest of boys, was then on the verge of manhood, and by his nobility and thrift supported Mrs. Bryan and Bessie Lee, his sweet and honored sister.

"In one point of view," said Clayton, "I can be husband to my widowed mother, and a father to my fatherless sister."

This was now his chief ambition of life and he fulfilled his mission nobly. Not only did he work to sup-

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port sister and mother, but by constant application, studied at night and within one year from his father's death, he was prepared to enter college.

During that time he had not only supported the inmates of his cottage home and provided a music teacher for Bessie Lee, but had saved enough money to supply the table at home during his ten months absence while at college. While all of this achievement was most gratifying to the noble young man, there was one thing lacking. This hindrance was the need of money with which to pay his way thru the term of college. This deficiency bothered the brave lad, but on he toiled. "Its my earnest prayer," said the widowed mother, "that God in his own good way, will pro-

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vide a way for my only son to enter college.”

Since his father’s death, the conduct of Clayton Bryan had been closely watched by the neighbors and his record was most gratifying to all. It was a cool, dewy morning when Mrs. Bryan and the two children sat at the breakfast table discussing the possibility of sending son to college. “The star of hope has shown dimly,” said the aspirant of a college career, “but with work, faith and prayer, the future makes all worthy things possible.”

“I admire the spirit you reveal,” nodded Mrs. Bryan, with approval.

The morning meal was finished and it was the ideal time for their happy morning chat. Ring! Ring! Ring! went the door bell. “It’s a gentleman at the door,” exclaimed

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Bessie Lee, who saw his form thru the glass.

Mrs. Bryan hastened to open the door.

"It's neighbor Russell," whispered Clayton to his sister.

Mr. Russel was seated in the parlor and a friendly conversation ensued.

"I am on my way to town," said Mr. Russell, "and as I passed your gate I felt divinely impressed to stop and see you."

"I am glad you came," responded Mrs. Bryan. "You have been very kind to us in our sad bereavement."

"Not kinder than was my duty to be," responded the neighbor.

"I had a long talk yesterday, with your son, Clayton," continued Mr. Russell, "and after learning his intentions and financial inability

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to go to college I have decided to pay you the four hundred dollars I borrowed from your deceased husband just before his death. This is a sacrifice," said Mr. Russell as he began to write the check, "but I'm glad to make it and regret my inability to have paid it sooner."

"You are very kind," said the lady with her ever pleasant smile, "this amount will carry Clayton thru the ten months of college quite nicely."

Thus concluding the interview the neighbor bade the widow a "good morning" and soon was on his way to town feeling that he had not only paid an honest debt but had aided an aspiring young man upon the ladder of success.

Soon as Mr. Russell left, Clayton, with his sister, rushed to the parlor to know the nature of the interview.

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The mother's face beamed with gladness which told that something pleasing had happened. Mrs. Bryan said, "Go look within the lids of the Bible in which God promises to answer prayer and you will find a way provided for you to go to college." Bessie Lee clapped her white hands with joy, and Clayton rushed to the center table and quickly turned the leaves of the worn Bible, till he found the precious treasure. "Why, it's a check for four hundred dollars," shouted the young man. "I'm the happiest person on earth."

"Let us kneel in prayer and show our gratitude to God," said the mother.

CHAPTER IV.

With new clothes, new books, and high ambition, Clayton Bryan was ready for college.

But one fear possessed his otherwise happy heart. Would Princess LeRoy be unmarried when he was graduated?

"I might get her to promise to remain single till my return," thought Clayton. "Anyway, I must try."

Ere the day set for his departure, Clayton Bryan visited "the damsel of his heart" at the pretty home of her parents.

'Twas a still, dark evening and the parlor fire burned brightly. "Miss Princess" began the lover, and the very name which he had heard called a thousand times at school, thrilled his heart.

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“This is our last interview till my return from college. I go to return an abler man and aspire to be worthy of your love. I leave with you my heart, and when you see me again, I will be a lecturer.”

Princess Leroy had not lifted her eyes from the bright grate-fire till she said: “Well, that is your calling, Clayton”—for she addressed him as if he were still her pupil. “You were the best orator in my school.”

He moved closer and said: “Miss Princess, you are the queen of my heart, I love you as I love no other under Heaven. Will you promise to remain unmarried ’till my return from college?”

“No, I can not promise that,” she answered, “but in all probability I’ll bear the same name when you see me again.”

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Clayton sighed—"then you do not return my love, Miss Princess?"

"Yes, I love you, but I can make you no promise," said the girl.

The lovers parted and Clayton's last sentence was, "let fate be what it may, but some day I'll be worthy of your love."

CHAPTER V.

After Graduating from College.

It was a beautiful October afternoon and Clayton Bryan was to celebrate his twenty-first birthday that night in the largest auditorium to be found in “The Village by the Sea.” Having just returned from a successful lecture tour which dated from his graduation, the young orator was billed to lecture in the auditorium—the minimum admission charge being fifty cents. It was the first opportunity afforded the citizens of “The Village by the Sea” to hear him on the lecture platform; although several of his leading townsmen heard his college address at the commencement which fairly swayed the great audience of more than five thou-

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sand persons. For two months the “home papers” had heralded the success of Clayton Bryan, and to-night was the greatly talked-of occasion.

The young orator again sat in his cottage home with mother and sister, and as he expressed it, was “prepared to meet defeat or success with smiles and patience, and fight life’s battles bravely.”

Family conversation ensued. Mrs. Bryan said, “Tonight, just twenty-two years ago, at this very hour, the wedding bells were sweetly ringing while your darling father and I sat talking of the future and our wedding which was to take place that October night. It was the village talk for weeks and when the hour came in which we were united as one, carriages filled the streets, friends and neighbors oc-

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cupied every space in the church and five hundred persons were turned away for lack of room. While no occasion can ever be so sweet to me as when I stood by his side at the marriage altar," continued Mrs. Bryan, "I think that your lecture tonight, the first I am to hear, will crown my heart with happiness and the crowd will be even larger than that which attended our happy wedding."

"I trust the occasion will be a success," said Clayton, "yet if it is not, I will accept defeat as a man and conquer in the future."

"You need not fear," spoke Bes-sie Lee, for it seems that every one in 'The Village' is going."

"Time shall tell," said Clayton, with an air of self-confidence, "and I am prepared for the occasion."

The hour approached. Predic-

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tions were not short of the result. Carriages filled the streets and the great auditorium was the scene of hundreds of persons crowding its entrance. By that time the young orator knew that the audience would number thousands and he was equal to the occasion.

The great audience which assembled at the auditorium packed the space with an expectant people. Hundreds stood in the aisles for lack of seats, while many were turned away for lack of room.

In box seats near the stage, was a party of young people, among whom was Miss Princess LeRoy.

Clayton Bryan came to the stage and took a side seat.

A thunderbolt of applause rang in all parts of the auditorium. But above the heads of the "box party," "Miss Princess" waved her

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white handkerchief, to which the young lecturer gave a smiling nod of the head. In the calm of the moment, Clayton Bryan's professor of the college from which he held a graduation certificate, arose, stepped to the stage-edge and said in part in a clear distinct voice:

“Ladies and gentlemen! I am glad to see this great auditorium thronged with the buds of youth, blossoms of beauty and wisdom of age. I have walked amid the gardens of nature when all the colors of the rainbow had faded from the sky and reappeared in the blooming flowers; the walks were lain with golden sands; the lovers sat by the wayside repeating the old story in a new light of love; music pealed in volumes of sentiment from the grand stand; children ran and frolicked like butterflies; the

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skies were pictures of crimson, gold and gray, bordered with blue; maidens dressed in violet and orange, walked arm in arm; fair ladies marched between flower-perfumed isles to the grand stand, while thoroughbred horses shot by on the race track amid applause of ten thousand voices—and I thought it was grand.

“But the grandest thing, nearest the radiance that ebbs from Almighty’s throne, is this vast audience assembled to hear their neighbor boy, America’s young orator, your friend and mine, Clayton Bryan.”

CHAPTER VI.

Five Years Later.

Five years of his successful “lecture career” passed, during which Clayton Bryan had retained the love of Princess LeRoy and had become a wealthy man in money and lands.

Not only was his life successful as a celebrated lecturer, but being “a son of knowledge” he invested his money to great advantage.

But in all of his prosperity, he had not forgotten the damsel of his first love, the “Princess” to whom he daily carried apples or grapes when he was climbing the lower steps of learning’s ladder.

Clayton Bryan was a strong man, in influence, knowledge, morality, and finance; but never could he forget his “first love.”

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Tho' twenty-six years of age, tho' five years of professional success, he had one great fear that Princess LeRoy loved him only for the fortune he possessed; and well did he remember her remark of "a poor boy" before his college career.

But one thing he knew well—namely, that he loved her above every other young lady of his acquaintance.

And his chiefest hope was to command her love on manhood's merit and not because of his station in life or financial possessions.

"Twenty-six is a good age for matrimony" thought Clayton, "but how can I test her love?"

"If I were poor, and yet possessed my profession," wondered he, "would she love me still?" "All is fair in love and war." This adage lingered in his mind. "I'll prove her love."

CHAPTER VII.

'Twas an August morning when Princess LeRoy lay in the hammock in the shady yard of her parents' home.

Ere the Eastern sun changed the cool of the morning or kissed the dew from the lips of the rose the newsboy threw the morning paper in the yard close by the hammock—so close that Princess only had to reach out her hand to get it.

The birds in the tree above her head, sang sweetly and brought her sentiments of love, while her mind traced the past when she taught “the poor boy” who gained her love, the time she said good bye on his departure to college, the memorable evening when he delivered his first lecture in “The Village by the Sea”—and down to the present, with his possession of wealth.

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“How can he doubt my love?”
she asked herself.

“Really, I do love him and him only.” Awaking from her day-dream, she read the morning paper. Little did she expect a shock but soon she saw headlines of “Bankruptcy” and then in plain language, that her own dear Clayton had become a poor man. She could not finish the article for her tears, and lay back into the hammock and wept like a hurt child.

After lifting her beautiful but tear swollen eyes from her wet handkerchief, she remembered that Clayton was due to call that evening.

“But may be he’s so discouraged over his ‘financial failure’ that he won’t come” she thought, “but I do hope he will, for I could cheer him with my sympathy.”

CHAPTER VIII.

Love's Test.

At evening, according to engagement, Clayton Bryan sat by the side of Princess Leroy in her parlor. He wore a forced look of care on his face which commanded the pity of his sweetheart.

And the care on his face was not altogether artificial, for it was an hour of decision—whether the girl loved him for himself, or for his money. “Love’s test is hard but just” thought Clayton and he played his part well.

“Have you heard of my bankruptcy?” asked Clayton somewhat sadly.

“Yes, all about it in the morning paper” responded Princess with tears. “Money is not honor, knowl-

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edge and morality," exclaimed Princess in a cheerful tone, "and doesn't buy the way to heaven."

"But from wealth to poverty is a sad change" responded the man.

"But you have great cause for cheer," said Princess sweetly, "you still have your profession and energy to use it, you still have the future and friends to love you."

"Very true," answered Clayton, "but even without a dollar to my credit, still I'd be rich if I had only you."

"Why that would increase your poverty and care," responded the damsel, smiling.

"But, little girl," said Clayton seriously, "even a penniless man has a heart; and poverty can not banish love. I loved you in my early school days, I loved you in my strides to gain knowledge, I



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loved you in my struggle to obtain means to attend college, I loved you in my early lecturing career, I loved you in the climax of my success and I love you still!"'

"Even tho' you are penniless," responded Princess, "I love you, too."

"Then you'll be my wife in face of my misfortune?" asked Clayton as he took her slender, white hand.

"Yes, indeed!" she responded.

"You are the truest, sweetest girl in the world" said Clayton, "and after all I guess our poverty won't cause much sacrifice, for my bankruptcy was only a bogus announcement to test your love."

The End.



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